

I AM STARTING THIS IN CAPS so you know I am not just clicking some prepared statement. The next paragraph contains my primary concern. Had it not been for an outpouring of public sentiment that got attention in Congress, the FCC - following the flimsiest of rationales in the face of the rationale of a free press in the Constitution - to abrogate precious rights by permitting a purely "business" decision to allow yet more concentrated ownership of the most potent form of communication on the planet.

In today's charged political atmosphere, which exceeds all previous splits between conservative and liberal in rancor and deception, people have been loathe to point out that it is not just whether people have more than one outlet for local news, but that we run the risk of mass media (and therefore news and editorial content) across the country dictated by the desires of a handful of people.

I urge you, beyond "advising" Sinclair, to sanction them in a way they will understand, to stand up for principles of democracy over oligarchy, citizens over dollars (in other words, for Heaven's sake consider the good of the country first in terms of how you operate your office/Commission). If they do act as announced, please recognize that - despite its airing during prime time - the proposed program is presented as news to a public by a company hijacking the airwaves. If they broadcast, please get serious - regardless of legal challenge - take steps to remove at least one of their broadcast licenses.

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.